

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. **(Currently Amended)** An information distribution method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network, comprising the steps of:

a user, who uses a network via a network provider under a condition of payment of a connection fee, transmitting a connection request that includes a user ID from an information terminal of said user to said network provider;

downloading a program from a server managed by said network provider, or by an entity that has a tie-up with said network provider;

transmitting, to said information terminal of said user, information with which a license key that is referred to when said downloaded program is activated or executed and that disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches a predetermined license condition ~~can be~~ is generated at said information terminal of said user;

updating said information with which a license key ~~can be~~ is generated by effecting a connection with said network provider, wherein said updating comprises:

again transmitting, at a time subsequent to said immediately preceding step, a connection request that includes said user ID from said information terminal of said user to said network provider; and

transmitting, to said information terminal of said user, information with which a new license key that is referred to when said downloaded program is activated or executed and that disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches another predetermined license condition ~~can~~ be is generated at said information terminal of said user, wherein said transmitting of said information for generating said new license key is conditioned upon said user establishing maintenance of said condition of payment of said connection fee via said connection.

2. **(Currently Amended)** An information distribution method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network, comprising the steps of:

a user, who obtains a user ID and a password and employs a network via a network provider under a condition of payment of a connection fee, activating a dialer at said information terminal, entering said user ID, said password and a telephone number for accessing said network provider, and transmitting a connection request to said network provider;

checking, upon the receipt of said connection request for said network provider, said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the check are negative, a message used to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning, when the results obtained by the check are affirmative, an IP address to said information terminal of said user, and registering a set consisting of said user ID and

said correlated IP address;

transmitting said IP address assigned for said information terminal of said user;

transmitting a service menu screen, which is an initial screen, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user;

said dialer determining whether a program key, uniquely identifying a program type at said network provider, is present at said information terminal, and where said program key is not found to be present transmitting, when said user selects a file for downloading an article on said service menu, a request for a connection with a file server from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

transmitting, when said file server receives said connection request, to said information terminal of said user a file downloading service menu or a menu that ~~can be~~ is introduced into said service menu;

transmitting, when said user selects the downloading of a desired program file from said file downloading service menu, a file downloading request from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

generating a license key, based on downloaded program specifying information, that is associated with said desired program file that is selected by said user and with said user ID that is specified for said IP address included in said file downloading request and assigned to said information terminal of said user, and information that is associated with a license condition for a downloaded program;

downloading to said information terminal said license key, said program key, and

said desired program file, said program file ~~being capable of~~ referring to said downloaded license key when said downloaded program is activated or executed, and ~~capable of~~ disabling at least a part of the function of said downloaded program, when said program matches a predetermined said licensing condition provided by reference to said license key;

disconnecting said information terminal of said user from said network provider;

updating said information for generating a license key by effecting a connection with said network provider, wherein said updating comprises:

activating a dialer, at a time subsequent to the termination of said immediately preceding step, in said information terminal of said user, entering said user ID, said password and said telephone number for accessing said network provider, and thereafter transmitting a connection request to said network provider;

checking again, when said network provider receives said connection request, said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the check are negative, a message used to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning an IP address, when the results obtained by the re-checking are affirmative, for said information terminal of said user and registering a set consisting of said user ID and said corresponding IP address;

transmitting said downloaded program specifying information from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

based on said user ID and said received downloaded program specifying information generating information from which a new license key ~~can be~~ is generated;

transmitting to said information terminal of said user said information from which a new license key ~~can be~~ is generated, wherein said transmitting of said information for generating said new license key is conditioned upon said user establishing maintenance of said condition of payment of said connection fee via said connection; and

generating a new license key at said information terminal of the user.

3. **(Currently Amended)** An information distribution method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network, comprising the steps of:

a user, who obtains a user ID and a password and employs a network via a network provider under a condition of payment of a connection fee, activating a dialer at said information terminal, entering said user ID, said password and a telephone number for accessing said network provider, and transmitting a connection request to said network provider;

checking, upon the receipt of said connection request for said network provider, said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the check are negative, a message used

to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning, when the results obtained by the check are affirmative, an IP address to said information terminal of said user, and registering a set consisting of said user ID and said correlated IP address;

transmitting said IP address assigned for said information terminal of said user;

transmitting a service menu screen, which is an initial screen, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user;

said dialer determining whether a program key, uniquely identifying a program type at said network provider, is present at said information terminal, and where said program key is not found to be present transmitting, when said user selects a file for downloading an article on said service menu, a request for a connection with a file server from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

transmitting, when said file server receives said connection request, to said information terminal of said user a file downloading service menu or a menu that ~~can be~~ is introduced into said service menu;

transmitting, when said user selects the downloading of a desired program file from said file downloading service menu, a file downloading request from said information terminal of said user to said network provider;

generating a license key, based on downloaded program specifying information, that is associated with said desired program file that is selected by said user and with said user ID that is specified for said IP address included in said file downloading request and

assigned to said information terminal of said user, and information that is associated with a license condition for a downloaded program;

registering said user ID and said downloaded program specifying information with which said user ID is correlated;

downloading to said information terminal said license key, said program key, and said desired program file, said program file ~~being capable of~~ referring to said downloaded license key when said downloaded program is activated or executed, and ~~capable of~~ disabling at least a part of the function of said downloaded program, when said program matches a predetermined said licensing condition provided by reference to said license key;

disconnecting said information terminal of said user from said network provider;

updating said information for generating a license key by effecting a connection with said network provider, wherein said updating comprises:

activating a dialer, at a time subsequent to the termination of said immediately preceding step, in said information terminal of said user, entering said user ID, said password and said telephone number for accessing said network provider, and thereafter transmitting a connection request to said network provider;

checking again, when said network provider receives said connection request, said user ID and said password that are included in said connection request;

transmitting, when the results obtained by the re-checking are negative, a message used to notify said user of a connection failure;

assigning an IP address, when the results obtained by the re-checking are affirmative, for said information terminal of said user and registering a set consisting of said user ID and said corresponding IP address;

searching for said downloaded program specifying information that is registered while correlated with said user ID;

based on said user ID and said downloaded program specifying information that is found through said search generating information from which a new license key ~~can be~~ is generated;

transmitting to said information terminal of said user said information from which a new license key ~~can be~~ is generated, wherein said transmitting of said information for generating said new license key is conditioned upon said user establishing maintenance of said condition of payment of said connection fee via said connection; and

generating a new license key at said information terminal of the user.

4. **(Currently Amended)** An information distribution method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network comprising the steps of:

transmitting a connection request, which includes a user ID, to a network provider from an information terminal of a user that holds either a license key, which is referred to when a program is activated or executed and which disables at least a part of the function

of said program when said program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key ~~can be~~ is generated at said information terminal of said user; and

transmitting, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user, information ~~that can~~ used to generate a new license key at the information terminal of said user, wherein said transmitting is conditioned upon the user effecting a connection with said network provider, and further wherein said user, by effecting said connection with said provider, establishes maintenance of a condition of payment of a connection fee with said provider.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Currently Amended) A software product for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network comprising:

program code for, when a connection request, including a user ID, is transmitted to a network provider from an information terminal of a user who employs, via said network provider, a network under a condition that is dependent on the payment of a connection fee, and when said information terminal is connected to said network provider and a program is downloaded from said network provider, or from a server operated by an entity having a tie-up with said network provider, generating a license key, which is referred to when said downloaded program is activated or executed and which disables at least a part of the function of said downloaded program when said downloaded program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key ~~can be~~ is generated at said information terminal of said user; and

program code for updating said transmitted license key or said information with which said license key ~~can be~~ is generated by effecting a connection with said network provider, wherein said user, by effecting said connection with said provider, establishes maintenance of said condition of payment of said connection fee with said provider, wherein said updating further comprises: program code for generating a new license key at the information terminal of said user for said downloaded program when said user is again connected to said network provider.

7. (Currently Amended) A program storage device readable by machine, tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the machine to perform a method for transmitting information to an information terminal connected via a network, said method comprising the steps of:

transmitting a connection request, which includes a user ID, to a network provider from an information terminal of a user that holds either a license key, which is referred to when a program is activated or executed and which disables at least a part of the function of said program when said program matches a predetermined license condition, or information with which said license key ~~can be~~ is generated at said information terminal of said user; and

transmitting, from said network provider to said information terminal of said user, information that can generate a new license key at the information terminal of said user, wherein said transmitting is conditioned upon the user effecting a connection with said network provider, and further wherein said user, by effecting said connection with said

provider, establishes maintenance of a condition of payment of a connection fee with said provider.

8. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 1, wherein the information used to generate the new license key comprises a user id and P-key.

9. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 8, wherein the user id is supplied by a user.

10. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 8, wherein the user id is a user id associated with an internet protocol address of the information terminal.

11. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 8, wherein the information used to generate the new license key further comprises a current date.

12. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 9, wherein the information used to generate the new license key further comprises a user password.

13. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 12, wherein the new license key is encrypted.

14. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 12, wherein the license key is used by the downloaded program to determine the current date.

15. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 4, wherein the information used to generate the new license key comprises a user id and P-key.

16. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 15, wherein the user id is supplied by a user.

17. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 15, wherein the user id is a user id associated with an internet protocol address of the information terminal.

18. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 15, wherein the information used to generate the new license key further comprises a current date.
19. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 16, wherein the information used to generate the new license key further comprises a user password.
20. **(New)** The information distribution method of claim 19, wherein the license key is used by the downloaded program to determine the current date.